

Fitness to Practice and Exit Policy and Procedures

Reading Specialist Certification Program

University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

This policy applies to all applicants for admission to and students enrolled in the Reading Specialist Certification program at the College of Education and P-16 Integration.

The Reading Specialist Certification program is designed to academically prepare individuals for the role of reading specialist. Accordingly, applicants for admission, students enrolled in the program and candidates for recommendation to the State of Texas for Reading Specialist Certification must be able to demonstrate essential abilities, professionalism, ethical behavior and other characteristics and behaviors adopted as standards for this profession. Throughout the program these abilities, performance and conduct are evaluated as an element of the student's academic performance. Students must have or demonstrate appropriate progress towards developing the necessary abilities, behaviors, attitudes, and professional competencies to practice as reading specialists.

Students are responsible for being knowledgeable about and complying with the requirements and standards of the University and any particular to their program. This includes the Regents' Rules and Regulations, the UTRGV Handbook of Operating Procedures, the UTRGV Graduate Catalog, and other program policies, procedures and criteria, including those addressed in this document which incorporates the UTRGV Professional Dispositions and the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educators, Title 19, Texas Administrative Code, Rule 247.2.

Essential Abilities

The ability to perform the following functions, with or without reasonable accommodations, is required:

- a. **Observation:** Reading Specialist candidates must be able to accurately observe demonstrations and students close at hand and at a distance to learn skills and to gather their students' data.
- b. **Communication:** Reading Specialist candidates must be able communicate in English orally and in writing. They also must be able to read and comprehend written material. *An individual with a disability who requests a reasonable accommodation must initiate a request by contacting the Office of Student Accessibility Services. Accommodations will be provided in accordance with University policy, UTRGV Handbook of Operating Procedures, [ADM 03-200](#).*
- c. **Psychomotor Skills:** Reading Specialist candidates must exhibit motor and sensory abilities to attend and participate in class and practicum placements.
- d. **Intellectual and Cognitive Abilities:** Reading Specialist candidates must be able to measure, calculate, reason, analyze, synthesize, integrate, and apply information.
- e. **Behavioral and Social Attributes:** Reading Specialist candidates must possess the emotional health required to fully use their intellectual abilities, such as exercising sound judgment, and developing mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with others such as their

students, parents, and colleagues. Candidates must possess the ability to function effectively under stress, adapt to changing environments, and display flexibility.

- f. Application of Ethical Standards:** Reading Specialist candidates must demonstrate professional demeanor and behavior and must perform in an ethical manner in dealings with others.

Fitness to Practice Standards

In addition to meeting the Reading Specialist Certification program specific and graduate program academic requirements set forth in the University Graduate Catalog, in order to successfully complete the program and be endorsed for reading specialist certification students must demonstrate professional dispositions outlined herein meeting or exceeding program standards in all settings, including classes, advising sessions, practicum sites, and all verbal and written communication:

1. Communication Skills:
 - a. Demonstrates professional level skills in written English to understand content presented in the program and to adequately complete all written assignments, as specified by faculty.
 - b. Communicates effectively with other students, faculty, staff, and professionals. Demonstrates professional level skills in spoken English to understand content presented in the program, to adequately complete all oral assignments, and to meet the objectives of the practicum, as specified by faculty.
 - c. Refrains from inappropriate communication with a student including electronic communications by cell phone, text messaging, email, instant messaging, blogging, tweeting, and other social network communications.
2. Professional dispositions:
 - a. understands and appreciates the value of diversity and looks beyond self in interactions with others; respects differences of race, ethnicity, language, religion, and social class, national allegiance, and cultural heritage.
 - b. Exhibits acceptance of and provides accommodations for exceptional learners.
 - c. Is open to new ideas, responsive, adaptable, and cooperative.
 - d. Is receptive to and use feedback.
 - e. Responds to conflict appropriately.
 - f. Accepts personal responsibility.
 - g. Is dependable in meeting obligations.
3. Ethical and legal considerations:
 - a. Conforms with the codes of ethics and standards of professional associations in reading/literacy and all related national and state licensure and certification organizations.
 - b. Maintains confidential information concerning students unless disclosure serves professional purposes or is required by law.
 - c. Demonstrates honesty and integrity by being truthful about background, experiences, and qualifications; doing one's own work; giving credit for the ideas of others; and providing proper citation of source materials.

The FTP Evaluation Process

All students will be evaluated based on the *Essential Abilities* and *Fitness to Practice Standards* by their instructor at midterm of the semester in which they take RLIT 6355. In addition, students can be evaluated as necessary throughout the program. An FTP review may be initiated on any student at any time if a faculty member, staff member, course instructor, program advisor or field supervisor believes the student has displayed behavior which suggests the student does not possess sufficient competency on one or more essential ability or FTP criteria.

Failure to meet essential abilities or FTP standard(s) may result in the student being dismissed from the Reading Specialist Certificate program without the opportunity for remediation depending on the severity of the circumstances.

Performance on the FTP standards will be rated on a scale of 0 (competence not achieved) to 1 (competence achieved) as described in this document. A rating of 1 on all standards will indicate competence. The completed *FTP Evaluation Form* will be shared with the student and the student will have an opportunity to respond. A copy of all FTP Evaluation Forms, the student response, if any, and any amendments to the Evaluations will be placed in the student's file.

A rating of 0 on any of the FTP standards will initiate the following procedure:

1. If the issuing faculty identifies a potential violation of the UTRGV Student Code of Conduct, including alleged illegal conduct, or UTRGV policy violations, they will refer the matter to the program coordinator and faculty review committee who should consult with the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities before the FPT evaluation is completed.

If there is no potential violation of the UTRGV Student Code of Conduct, after the *FTP Evaluation Form* is completed the issuing faculty will inform the program coordinator and contact the student to schedule a meeting to review the *Form*. The meeting will be held with the issuing faculty and program coordinator. The student has five business days to respond to the request to schedule a meeting. If the student does *not* respond by the close of business on the fifth business day, the matter will proceed to step 3 below.

2. At the meeting, the issuing faculty will review the *FTP Evaluation Form* with the student and discuss a remediation plan, if applicable. Within ten business days after the meeting, the issuing faculty will provide a final copy of the remediation plan (incorporating any changes agreed upon at the meeting) to the student for review and signature. The student will have ten business days to review, sign, and return the remediation plan. Failure of the student to sign and/or return the remediation plan by the close of business on the tenth business day will not impede the process and may be considered during the fitness to practice process.

The remediation plan may include:

- Specific competency(ies) from the *Fitness to Practice Standards* which require remediation,
- Specific recommendations to achieve remediation,
- Specific requirements to demonstrate remediation efforts have been successful, and

- A specific deadline for subsequent monitoring to evaluate progress.

Both the student and issuing faculty should retain copies of the signed *FTP Evaluation Form* and remediation plan and copies will be provided to the program coordinator to be placed in the student's file. At any time during the remediation process, the issuing faculty member may refer the student to a faculty review committee.

3. A faculty review committee will be convened if:
 - a. the reviewer identifies a potential violation of the UTRGV Student Code of Conduct, including alleged illegal conduct, or UTRGV policy violations,
 - b. A student fails to respond to the issuing faculty's request to schedule a meeting to review the *FTP Evaluation Form*,
 - c. A student fails to show reasonable progress in the remediation plan, or
 - d. A student receives more than one *FTP Evaluation Form* rated 0 during his or her Program of Study.

The committee will be comprised of three faculty appointed by the program coordinator. The student will be required to meet with the faculty review committee to review the *FTP Evaluation Form* and, if applicable, progress on the remediation plan. During the meeting the student will have the opportunity to respond to the evaluation and to present their case to the committee. The faculty review committee may consult with any of the College of Education and P-16 Integration faculty regarding the development of alternative remedial strategies and/or evaluation of the student's fitness for continuation in the Reading Specialist Certification program. The committee will complete a Fitness to Practice Evaluation Form, including a remediation plan (if applicable). A copy of this form will be provided to the student and the program coordinator and will be placed in the student's file.

If the student is placed on a remediation plan, the program coordinator will monitor the student's progress. If at any time the student is determined not to be making satisfactory progress, the faculty review committee may either modify the remediation plan or recommend dismissal of the student from the Reading Specialist Certification program to the Educator Preparation Committee (EPC).

The dismissal of a candidate from the EPP is a significant event for the candidate, the program, and the program faculty and represents the determination by the faculty that the candidate should be dismissed based on one or more grounds set forth above.

Dismissal of a candidate based on concerns relating to professional dispositions or abilities is typically the outcome of careful inquiry and collection of data from multiple sources, as well as communication with the candidate regarding dispositions concerns and a growth action plan as outlined in the Fitness to Practice Policy. Dismissal from the EPP is determined by the Educator Preparation Committee (EPC). This may occur at any time while the candidate is enrolled in the EPP. Matters involving recurring or serious dispositional concerns as determined at the department level by faculty/staff, and/or administrators, will be referred to the Co-Chairs of the EPC who will schedule a meeting to address these concerns with the EPC. Any other matter involving one or more potential grounds for dismissal of a candidate shall be reported to the EPC Co-Chair or EPC for consideration. The EPC Co-Chairs will determine whether the candidate's matter should be referred to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities (SRR) for

review under the applicable University policies. If the matter is not referred to SRR, the EPC shall review and decide the outcome of the candidate's matter. The EPC will follow the process outlined in the EPP exit policy, [Exit Policy](#).

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Fitness to Practice and Exit (FTP) Evaluation Form

Student Name: _____ Student ID: _____

Evaluator Name: _____ Date: _____

Your professional performance and dispositions have been evaluated according to the Reading Specialist Certification Program Fitness to Practice and Exit policy.

Standard	Competence Not Achieved (0)	Competence Achieved (1)	No Opportunity to Observe
Communication Skills			
Demonstrates professional level skills in written English to understand content presented in the program and to adequately complete all written assignments, as specified by faculty.			
Communicates effectively with other students, faculty, staff, and professionals. Demonstrates professional level skills in spoken English to understand content presented in the program, to adequately complete all oral assignments, and to meet the objectives of the practicum, as specified by faculty.			
Refrains from inappropriate communication with a student including electronic communications by cell phone, text messaging, email, instant messaging, blogging, tweeting, and other social network communications.			
Professional Dispositions			
Understands and appreciates the value of diversity and looks beyond self in interactions with others; respects differences of race, ethnicity, language, religion, and social class, national allegiance, and cultural heritage.			
Exhibits acceptance of and provides accommodations for exceptional learners.			
Is open to new ideas, responsive, adaptable, and cooperative			
Is aware of own impact on others			
Is receptive to and uses feedback			
Responds to conflict appropriately			
Accepts personal responsibility			
Is dependable in meeting obligations			

Ethical and Legal Considerations			
Conforms with the codes of ethics and standards of professional associations in reading/literacy and all			
related national and state licensure and certification organizations.			
Maintains confidential information concerning students unless disclosure serves professional purposes or is required by law.			
Demonstrates honesty and integrity by being truthful about background, experiences, and qualifications; doing one's own work; giving credit for the ideas of others; and providing proper citation of source materials.			

Does the student meet the essential abilities as described in the Fitness to Practice and Exit policy?

_____ yes _____no

Is competence achieved in each FTP Standard? _____ yes _____no

If the essential abilities are **not** met or competence in each FTP standard observed is **not** achieved, describe the specific behavior(s) indicating this:

What steps does the student need to take to remediate this issue? *(include specific recommendations, how success will be evaluated, and a deadline for subsequent monitoring of progress)*

Signatures (*acknowledging student receipt of this evaluation*)

Student

Evaluator

Witness/Others in Attendance

Witness/Other in Attendance

Issue resolved/remediation successful _____ (date)

Issue referred to Faculty Review Committee _____ (date)

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Fitness to Practice and Exit (FTP) Evaluation—Faculty Review Committee

Student Name: _____ Student ID: _____ Date: _____

Committee Members: _____

The Faculty Review Committee will meet with the student to discuss this form and any actions resulting from the FTP review.

The student has been referred to the Faculty Review Committee because:

_____ The student did not show sufficient progress on a remediation plan.

_____ The student did not respond to an evaluator's request to schedule a meeting to review the FTP Evaluation Form.

_____ The student has received more than one 0 rating on an FTP Evaluation form during his/her program of study.

_____ The student engaged in illegal or unethical activities, presented a threat to the wellbeing of others, or violated the UTRGV Student Code of Conduct or the Handbook of Operating Procedures. Referrals for this reason must also be reported to the UTRGV Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities.

The specific areas of concern that have resulted in this referral, including any standards where the student has not achieved competence, are as follows:

After examining evidence presented from previous FTP reviews, information from the student, and information from faculty/staff involved in the case, the Faculty Review Committee has made the following recommendation:

_____ The student is allowed to proceed in the program without further remediation plan.

_____ The student is allowed to proceed in the program with remediation plan (*see attached specific recommendations, how success will be evaluated, and a deadline for subsequent monitoring of progress*).

_____ The student is dismissed from the program effective immediately.

Student Signature (*indicates notification of decision and is not an indication of agreement*)

Committee Member

Committee Member

Committee Member

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For students placed on remediation plan:

Issue resolved/remediation successful _____ (date)

Issue returned to Faculty Review Committee _____ (date)